

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

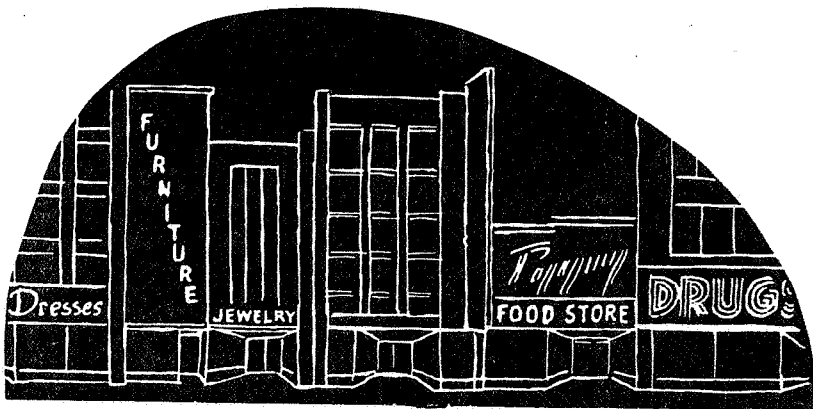
Sinclair Weeks, Secretary

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Robert W. Burgess, Director



ANNUAL RETAIL TRADE REPORT — 1956



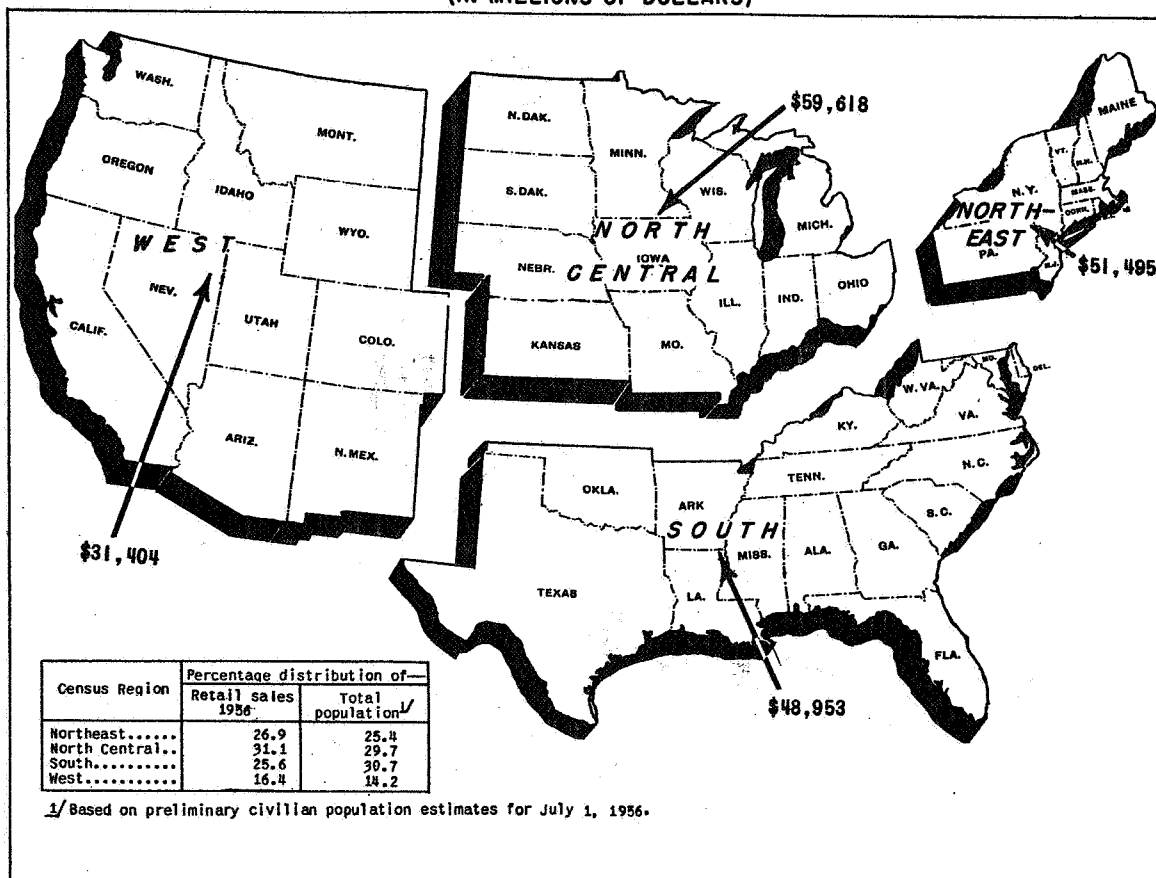
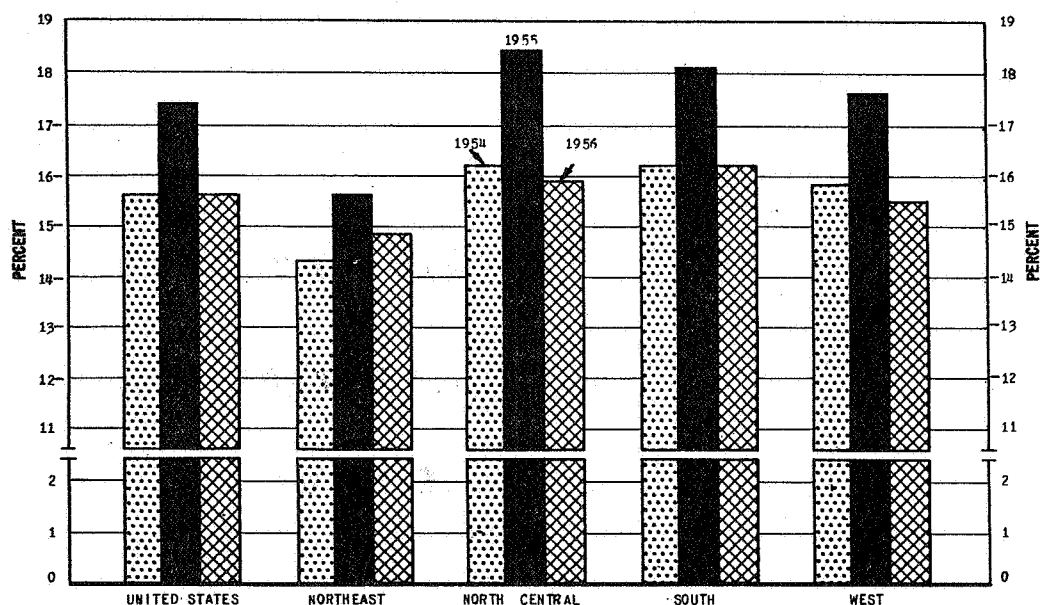
SALES BY REGION ►

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE ►

MERCHANDISE INVENTORIES ►

RETAIL SALES BY CENSUS REGION—1956

(IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS)

SALES OF PASSENGER CAR DEALERS (FRANCHISED) AS
A PERCENT OF TOTAL RETAIL SALES—
UNITED STATES AND CENSUS REGIONS
1954-1956

ANNUAL RETAIL TRADE REPORT: 1956

Annual sales by Census region

Sales of all retail stores during 1956 showed slight to moderate increases over 1955 among the four Census regions, with the Northeast, South, and West regions each gaining 4 percent and the North Central increasing 1 percent. Among Group II retail stores (stores of organizations operating 11 or more retail stores in 1948) larger year-to-year increases were experienced, with sales in the South up 10 percent, the Northeast and West each up 6 percent, and the North Central up 5 percent.

A slight increase from 1955 in the proportion of sales of Group II stores to sales of all retail stores (18.4% to 19.1%) reflect both the increase in sales of Group II stores among the food and general merchandise groups, and the general decrease in sales of the automotive group which are concentrated heavily among stores of organizations operating 1 to 10 retail stores.

Merchandise inventories

Merchandise held for sale by all retail stores in the United States on December 31, 1956 amounted to \$21.2 billion at cost value, an increase of 3 percent from year-end 1955. An additional \$980 million worth of goods were located in warehouses of large retail multiunit organizations.

Stocks of passenger car dealers at year-end 1956 were down 9 percent after reaching a peak \$3.3 billion at year-end 1955. Eating and drinking places also registered a 6 percent decrease in year-end inventories from 1955. Inventories of grocery stores increased 5 percent, and substantial gains were experienced among stores in the apparel group. Slight to moderate increases were noted among most of the remaining kinds of business.

Sales inventory ratios

Annual sales for 1956 for all retail kinds of business combined were a little more than 9 times the cost value of year-end inventories.

This is the same as the 1955 sales-stock ratio for all retail stores with slight changes from the year-end 1955 ratios noted throughout most of the kinds of business. For stores of organizations operating 11 or more retail stores, total 1956 sales were 12 times year-end inventories for 1956, also duplicating their 1955 ratio. Ratios of sales to inventory range from 2.6 for jewelry stores to 44.4 for meat and fish markets. The ratios do not include measures of warehouse inventories of organizations operating 11 or more stores.

Accounts receivable

Balances due retail stores from customers, as a result of credit sales, totaled about \$11.6 billion on December 31, 1956. This represents a 2 percent increase from December 31, 1955 and a 9 percent increase from December 31, 1954. Of the 1956 year-end total, about \$2.3 billion each were receivables due stores in the general merchandise group and furniture and appliance groups. Establishments in the lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group were due about \$1.7 billion in receivables. Receivables data represents outstanding account balances held by retail stores and does not include consumer credit paper held by financial institutions and collection agencies.

Among the stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores, total receivables amounted to \$2.0 billion of which the general merchandise group comprised about \$891 million. Total receivables of Group II stores at year-end 1956 show a 5 percent decrease from year-end 1955, and a 7 percent increase from year-end 1954.

* * *

These and other related data are contained in the tables of this Annual report. A statement on the sampling design and reliability of the data and explanation of terms will be found on pages 10 through 12.

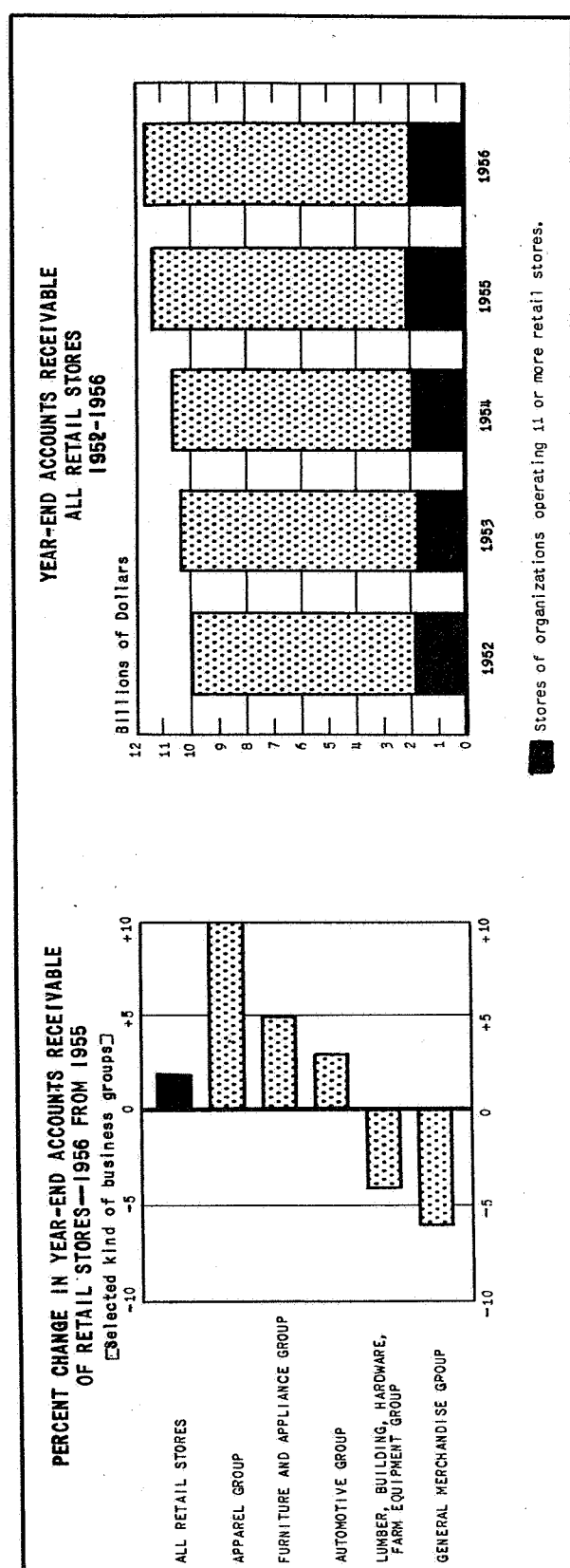
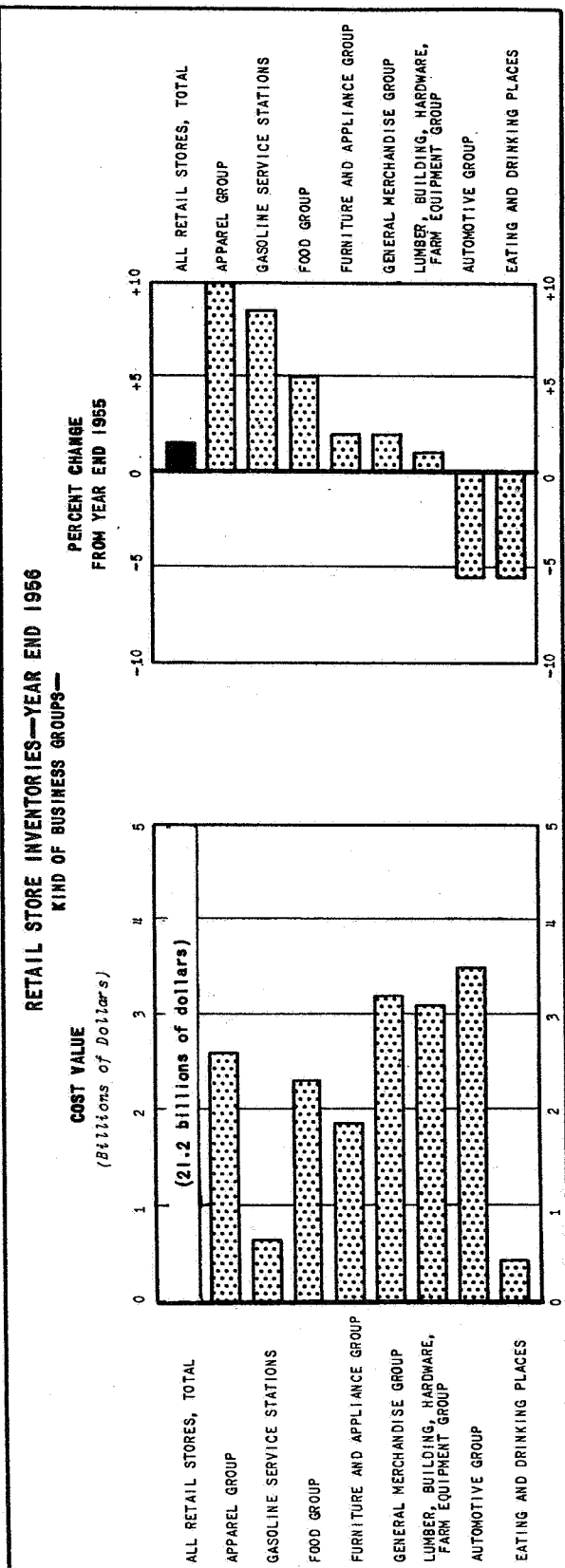


Table 1.—ESTIMATED SALES OF RETAIL STORES—UNITED STATES AND CENSUS REGIONS BY KIND OF BUSINESS: 1956

[Millions of dollars. Group II stores are those of organizations operating 11 or more stores]

Kind of business	United States		Census regions ¹							
			Northeast		North Central		South		West	
	Amount	Percent change, 1956 from 1955	Amount	Percent change, 1956 from 1955	Amount	Percent change, 1956 from 1955	Amount	Percent change, 1956 from 1955	Amount	Percent change, 1956 from 1955
ALL RETAIL STORES										
United States, total.....	191,470	+3	51,495	+4	59,618	+1	48,953	+4	31,404	+4
Food group.....	45,965	+5	13,717	+5	13,458	+3	11,389	+7	7,401	+9
Grocery stores ²	39,179	+6	10,456	+6	11,566	+3	10,512	+7	6,645	+10
Eating and drinking places.....	14,318	+5	4,491	+4	4,469	+4	2,951	+7	2,407	+6
Eating places.....	9,363	+5	2,987	+4	2,533	+4	2,165	+7	1,678	+6
Drinking places.....	4,955	+4	1,504	+5	1,936	+3	786	+8	729	+5
General merchandise group.....	20,760	+3	4,855	+3	6,906	+3	5,757	+3	3,272	+4
Department stores, including mail order....	12,732	+4	3,075	+4	4,663	+3	3,025	+6	1,969	+5
Mail order (catalog sales).....	1,406	+6				(3)				
Variety stores.....	3,423	+4	1,029	+4	992	+3	952	+6	450	+2
Other general merchandise stores ⁴	4,605	0	751	-1	1,251	+2	1,750	-2	853	+3
Apparel group.....	11,611	+8	4,053	+7	3,056	+4	2,985	+12	1,517	+8
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	3,989	+8	1,354	+10	989	0	1,104	+13	542	+9
Shoe stores.....	2,068	+3	732	-1	578	+5	470	n.a.	288	n.a.
Furniture and appliance group.....	10,666	+6	3,183	+10	3,130	+7	2,660	+4	1,693	+1
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	13,769	-1	2,711	+4	5,264	-3	3,348	-2	2,446	+5
Automotive group.....	36,121	-6	8,945	-1	10,996	-11	10,054	-3	6,126	-6
Passenger car dealers (franchised) ⁵	29,897	-7	7,645	-1	9,472	-12	7,916	-7	4,864	-8
Gasoline service stations.....	13,738	+11	2,539	+11	4,593	+10	4,031	+12	2,575	+11
Drug and proprietary stores.....	5,775	+10	1,318	+7	1,879	+8	1,521	+11	1,057	+18
Liquor stores.....	3,943	+11	1,298	+12	949	+14	995	+8	701	+10
GROUP II RETAIL STORES										
United States, total ⁶	36,534	+7	10,505	+6	11,035	+5	9,238	+10	5,756	+6
Food group.....	16,546	+8	5,685	+6	4,688	+6	4,019	+15	2,154	+7
Grocery stores ²	15,454	+9	5,162	+6	4,343	+6	3,863	+16	2,086	+8
Eating and drinking places.....	756	+7	336	+10	185	+3	157	+8	78	+4
General merchandise group.....	10,341	+6	2,170	+7	3,422	+4	2,826	+8	1,923	+8
Department stores, including mail order....	6,224	+7	1,214	+9	2,141	+4	1,637	+10	1,232	+8
Variety stores.....	2,613	+4	818	+3	753	+4	710	+5	332	+7
Apparel group.....	2,249	+4	785	+4	628	+2	516	+4	320	+6
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores....	173	-6	73	-6	48	-9	30	+7	22	-12
Women's apparel and accessory stores ⁷	863	+1	242	+3	254	0	243	+1	124	+2
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	788	+1	222	+3	217	-2	232	+1	117	+2
Shoe stores.....	784	+8	256	+8	222	+7	184	+10	122	+11
Furniture and appliance group.....	711	-1	201	+2	166	+1	225	+2	119	-9
Other retail stores.....	2,977	+7	905	+5	791	+9	759	+9	522	+9
Drug and proprietary stores.....	836	+6	127	0	345	+7	223	+8	141	+9
Liquor stores.....	891	+8	294	+9	195	+11	244	+7	158	+5

n.a. Not available.

¹ For States comprising the Census regions see Page 7.² Includes data for grocery stores with and without fresh meat.³ Withheld to avoid possible disclosure.⁴ Includes data for general stores and dry goods and general merchandise stores.⁵ Does not include data for passenger car dealers (nonfranchised).⁶ Data for lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group; automotive group; and gasoline service stations included in United States total only.⁷ Includes data for women's ready-to-wear; other apparel, accessory, specialty; and furriers.

Note: Group totals include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

Table 1A.—SAMPLING VARIABILITY OF DOLLAR VOLUME ESTIMATES OF SALES OF ALL RETAIL STORES*

Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)					Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)				
	United States	North-east	North Central	South	West		United States	North-east	North Central	South	West
ALL RETAIL STORES						ALL RETAIL STORES—Con.					
United States, total.....	1	2	1	2	2	Apparel group.....	2	5	4	4	6
Food group.....	1	1	2	2	4	Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	3	5	6	7	8
Grocery stores.....	1	1	2	2	4	Shoe stores.....	3	6	6	5	8
Eating and drinking places.....	3	7	4	6	5	Furniture and appliance group.....	3	5	4	6	7
Eating places.....	3	8	4	6	6	Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	3	5	4	5	8
Drinking places.....	3	5	4	9	10	Automotive group.....	2	5	4	4	6
General merchandise group.....	1	2	1	3	3	Passenger car dealers (franchised)	3	6	4	4	7
Department stores, including mail order.....	1	1	2	4	3	Gasoline service stations.....	2	4	4	4	4
Mail order (catalog sales).....	0	0	0	0	0	Drug and proprietary stores.....	2	4	4	4	7
Variety stores.....	2	3	2	3	4	Liquor stores.....	4	6	6	8	6
Other general merchandise stores..	3	10	5	5	7						

* Data for Group II retail stores are not subject to sampling variability.

Table 2.--MERCHANDISE INVENTORIES OF RETAIL STORES BY KIND OF BUSINESS--UNITED STATES: DECEMBER 31, 1956

Estimated volume for all retail stores and warehouses of multiunit organizations

Kind of business	Merchandise inventories, at cost, December 31, 1956						Warehouses of organizations operating 11 or more retail stores
	All retail stores		Retail stores of organizations operating--				
			4 or more retail stores		11 or more retail stores		
	Amount	Percent change, from Dec. 31, 1955	Amount	Percent change, from Dec. 31, 1955	Amount	Percent change, from Dec. 31, 1955	
United States, total.....	21,183.8	+3	4,065.9	+7	3,011.3	+6	982.5
Food group.....	2,304.8	+5	633.1	+15	537.9	+16	446.3
Grocery stores ²	2,123.9	+5	604.6	+16	516.9	+17	423.6
Eating and drinking places.....	433.1	-6	17.3	+11	13.8	+13	9.1
General merchandise group.....	3,217.6	+4	1,719.7	+6	1,366.4	+3	162.6
Department stores, including mail order.....	1,677.5	+2	1,083.5	+6	808.0	+2	89.7
Mail order (catalog sales).....	225.9	-1	225.9	-1	225.9	-1	-
Variety stores.....	597.7	+8	391.0	+5	371.7	+6	40.5
Other general merchandise stores ³	942.4	+4	245.2	+3	186.7	0	32.4
Dry goods and general merchandise stores.....	696.0	+4	223.0	+7	175.5	0	29.5
Apparel group.....	2,583.3	+10	454.5	+6	319.3	+10	60.9
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.....	657.4	+7	55.6	0	37.7	+15	7.6
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	688.8	+8	119.8	+6	70.4	+3	9.0
Shoe stores.....	510.0	+7	166.9	+10	125.3	+12	25.2
Furniture and appliance group.....	1,844.2	+4	192.2	-5	88.9	-2	39.7
Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	1,297.2	+5	(4)	(4)	28.9	+3	25.8
Furniture stores.....	999.9	+6	(4)	(4)	27.8	+3	9.0
Household appliance, radio stores.....	587.0	+2	79.7	-3	60.0	-4	13.7
Household appliance dealers.....	441.4	0	68.3	-6	54.5	-3	10.9
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	3,117.7	+2	415.8	+2	275.3	+2	25.2
Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	1,366.3	+1	263.6	-8	176.8	-8	14.3
Lumber yards, building materials dealers.....	1,124.3	+1	218.9	-9	140.6	-9	3.0
Hardware stores.....	842.6	+7	(4)	(4)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Farm equipment dealers.....	908.8	-1	(4)	(4)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Automotive group.....	3,513.8	+6	209.7	+26	(3)	(3)	25.8
Passenger car dealers, other automotive dealers.....	3,169.2	+7	(4)	(4)	(3)	(3)	-
Passenger car dealers.....	2,992.7	+9	(4)	(4)	(3)	(3)	-
Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	344.6	+9	138.9	+12	129.3	+8	25.8
Gasoline service stations.....	649.8	+7	(4)	(4)	15.9	+19	6.6
Other retail stores.....	3,519.5	+6	393.0	+5	250.3	n.a.	206.3
Drug and proprietary stores.....	956.7	+5	119.2	+6	97.8	+9	47.8
Liquor stores.....	486.3	+8	91.0	+4	79.7	+4	101.9
Jewelry stores.....	478.1	-6	(4)	(4)	17.0	+3	3.1

n.a. Not available.

¹ See page 11 regarding revisions in 1955 inventory estimates.² Includes data for grocery stores with and without fresh meat.³ Includes data for general stores and dry goods and general merchandise stores.⁴ Not shown because of high sampling variability.⁵ Withheld to avoid possible disclosure.

Table 2A.--SAMPLING VARIABILITIES OF INVENTORY ESTIMATES FOR RETAIL STORES*

Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)		Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)		Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)	
	All retail stores	4 or more retail stores		All retail stores	4 or more retail stores		All retail stores	4 or more retail stores
United States, total.....	1	1	Apparel group--Con.			Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group--Con.		
Food group.....	2	2	Shoe stores.....	6	6	Hardware stores.....	4	-
Grocery stores.....	2	2	Furniture and appliance group.....	4	10	Farm equipment dealers.....	8	-
Eating and drinking places.....	4	5	Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	5	-	Automotive group.....	3	5
General merchandise group.....	2	1	Furniture stores.....	5	-	Passenger car, other automotive dealers.....	4	-
Department stores, including mail order.....	1	2	Household appliance, radio stores	5	4	Passenger car dealers.....	4	-
Mail order (catalog sales).....	0	0	Household appliance dealers.....	6	4	Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	6	4
Variety stores.....	4	2	Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	3	6	Gasoline service stations.....	3	-
Other general merchandise stores.....	6	4	Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	4	6	Other retail stores.....	2	5
Dry goods and general merchandise stores.....	6	4	Lumber yards, building materials dealers.....	5	7	Drug and proprietary stores.....	4	5
Apparel group.....	3	3				Liquor stores.....	5	3
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.....	6	8				Jewelry stores.....	7	-
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	4	6						

* Data on retail stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores are not based on a sample and are therefore not subject to sampling variability.

Table 3.—SALES-INVENTORY RATIOS BY KIND OF BUSINESS, UNITED STATES: 1956

All retail stores and stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores

Ratio¹ of annual sales to year-end inventories of retail stores

Kind of business	1956		Kind of business	1956	
	Total	Group II stores ²		Total	Group II stores ²
United States, total.....	9.2	12.0	Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	4.5	5.0
Food group.....	20.8	30.7	Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	5.8	4.1
Grocery stores ³	19.3	30.0	Lumber yards, building materials dlrs.	5.8	3.7
Meat markets, fish markets.....	44.4	n.a.	Hardware stores.....	3.6	(⁵)
Eating and drinking places.....	31.6	n.a.	Farm equipment dealers.....	3.4	(⁵)
General merchandise group.....	6.5	7.4	Automotive group.....	10.1	7.1
Department stores, including mail order...	7.4	7.5	Passenger car, other automotive dealers.	10.6	(⁵)
Mail order (catalog sales).....	5.9	5.9	Passenger car dealers.....	10.9	(⁵)
Variety stores.....	6.0	7.1	Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	5.8	5.9
Other general merchandise stores ⁴	5.3	7.9	Gasoline service stations.....	22.1	38.5
Dry goods, general merchandise stores...	5.2	7.9	Other retail stores.....	7.3	12.1
Apparel group.....	4.7	6.8	Drug and proprietary stores.....	6.4	8.6
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.	3.5	4.4	Drug stores.....	6.4	(⁵)
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	6.4	10.7	Liquor stores.....	8.5	11.9
Family clothing stores.....	4.9	5.9	Jewelry stores.....	2.6	4.2
Shoe stores.....	3.9	5.9	Feed, farm, and garden supply stores...	12.4	n.a.
Furniture and appliance group.....	5.8	7.8	Cigar stores.....	12.0	14.4
Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	5.4	10.0	Florists.....	20.7	-
Furniture stores.....	5.1	6.9	Fuel and ice dealers.....	13.7	13.7
Household appliance, radio stores.....	6.8	6.8	Book and stationery stores.....	6.5	n.a.
Household appliance dealers.....	6.9	6.5			

n.a. Not available.

¹ Based on only those firms in business the full calendar year.² Stores of organizations operating 11 or more retail stores. Warehouse inventories are excluded.³ Includes data for grocery stores with and without fresh meat.⁴ Includes data for general stores and dry goods and general merchandise stores.⁵ Withheld to avoid possible disclosure.

Note: Group ratios include data for kinds of business not shown separately.

STATES COMPRISING CENSUS REGIONS			
NORTHEAST REGION	NORTH CENTRAL REGION	SOUTH REGION	WEST REGION
<u>New England Division</u> Maine New Hampshire Vermont Massachusetts Rhode Island Connecticut	<u>East North Central Division</u> Ohio Indiana Illinois Michigan Wisconsin	<u>South Atlantic Division</u> Delaware Maryland District of Columbia Virginia West Virginia North Carolina South Carolina Georgia Florida	<u>Mountain Division</u> Montana Idaho Wyoming Colorado New Mexico Arizona Utah Nevada
<u>Middle Atlantic Division</u> New York New Jersey Pennsylvania	<u>West North Central Division</u> Minnesota Iowa Missouri North Dakota South Dakota Nebraska Kansas	<u>East South Central Division</u> Kentucky Tennessee Alabama Mississippi	<u>Pacific Division</u> Washington Oregon California
		<u>West South Central Division</u> Arkansas Louisiana Oklahoma Texas	

Table 4.—ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE OF RETAIL STORES BY KIND OF BUSINESS, UNITED STATES, DECEMBER 31, 1956, 1955 AND 1954

Estimated volume for all stores and for stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores

(Millions of dollars)

Kind of business	Accounts receivable as of December 31				
	1956	1955	1954	Percentage change	
				Dec. 31, 1956 from Dec. 31, 1955	Dec. 31, 1955 from Dec. 31, 1954
ALL RETAIL STORES					
United States, total.....	11,589.0	11,382.0	10,586.8	+2	+8
Food group.....	538.1	520.8	476.9	+3	+9
Grocery stores.....	352.1	341.9	312.7	+3	+9
Eating and drinking places.....	49.8	39.9	30.0	+25	+33
General merchandise group.....	2,339.6	2,478.8	2,269.0	-6	+9
Department stores, including mail order.....	2,058.6	2,205.8	1,984.2	-7	+11
Mail order (catalog sales).....	307.2	282.7	232.1	+9	+22
Other general merchandise stores.....	255.1	250.8	262.5	+2	+4
Apparel group.....	879.2	798.9	817.3	+10	-2
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.....	178.7	164.7	174.3	+8	-6
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	395.8	359.3	331.7	+10	+8
Family clothing stores.....	211.7	194.9	209.6	+9	-7
Furniture and appliance group.....	2,327.7	2,207.8	2,104.0	+5	+5
Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	1,735.6	1,622.4	1,524.5	+7	+6
Furniture stores.....	1,562.9	1,462.6	1,397.7	+7	+5
Household appliance, radio stores.....	592.1	595.4	579.5	+1	+3
Household appliance dealers.....	504.9	500.6	484.5	+1	+3
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	1,724.1	1,792.9	1,658.3	-4	+8
Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	1,166.5	1,187.2	1,084.1	-2	+10
Hardware stores.....	258.6	304.1	294.0	-15	+3
Automotive group.....	1,492.1	1,454.3	1,288.4	+3	+13
Passenger car dealers, other automotive dealers.....	1,129.8	1,125.6	999.5	0	+13
Passenger car dealers.....	1,081.3	1,087.4	975.1	-1	+12
Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	362.3	328.7	288.9	+10	+14
Gasoline service stations.....	380.9	353.4	301.1	+8	+17
Other retail stores.....	1,857.5	1,735.2	1,641.8	+7	+6
Drug and proprietary stores.....	101.7	88.2	60.7	+15	+46
RETAIL STORES OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING 11 OR MORE STORES					
United States, total.....	2,038.0	2,147.1	1,905.1	-5	+3
Food group.....	60.2	54.7	52.8	+10	+3
Grocery stores.....	18.5	15.1	13.1	+22	+16
Eating and drinking places.....	10.2	7.8	6.4	+31	+22
General merchandise group.....	890.9	999.2	848.5	-11	+18
Department stores, including mail order.....	840.3	954.0	806.1	-12	+18
Mail order (catalog sales).....	307.2	282.7	232.1	+9	+22
Other general merchandise stores.....	27.6	27.1	25.2	+2	+8
Dry goods, general merchandise stores.....	15.6	16.9	15.6	-8	+8
Apparel group.....	120.3	108.3	99.3	+11	+9
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.....	16.6	14.7	12.8	+13	+15
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	39.2	30.9	27.3	+27	+13
Family clothing stores.....	60.2	58.3	55.4	+3	+5
Furniture and appliance group.....	301.7	309.9	282.2	-3	+10
Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	132.4	132.5	123.7	0	+7
Furniture stores.....	111.2	111.4	101.1	0	+10
Household appliance, radio stores.....	169.3	177.4	158.5	+5	+12
Household appliance dealers.....	167.4	173.8	153.4	-4	+13
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	166.0	236.6	213.3	-30	+11
Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	118.8	121.3	111.7	-2	-2
Automotive group.....	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	206.5	181.2	171.5	+14	+6
Other retail stores.....	270.7	235.4	219.7	+15	+7

¹ Withheld to avoid possible disclosure.

Note: Group and United States totals may include data for kinds of business not shown separately and therefore may not agree with addition of detail.

Table 5.—ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE BY CHARGE AND INSTALLMENT ACCOUNTS, RETAIL STORES BY KIND OF BUSINESS GROUP:
DECEMBER 31, 1956, 1955 AND 1954

Estimated volume for all stores and for stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores

(Millions of dollars)

Kind of business	Total			Charge accounts			Installments		
	1956	1955	1954	1956	1955	1954	1956	1955	1954
ALL RETAIL STORES									
United States, total.....	11,589.0	11,382.0	10,586.8	6,892.2	6,845.4	6,365.3	4,696.8	4,536.6	4,221.5
Food group.....	538.1	520.8	476.9	518.0	499.0	460.7	20.1	21.8	16.2
Eating and drinking places.....	49.8	39.9	30.0	49.8	39.9	30.0	-	-	-
General merchandise group.....	2,339.6	2,478.8	2,269.0	1,010.4	1,051.0	1,047.3	1,329.2	1,427.8	1,221.7
Department stores, including mail order.....	2,058.6	2,205.8	1,984.2	831.7	876.8	861.1	1,226.9	1,329.0	1,123.1
Apparel group.....	879.2	798.9	817.3	702.1	648.1	670.2	177.1	150.8	147.1
Furniture and appliance group.....	2,327.7	2,207.8	2,104.0	773.0	807.0	681.2	1,554.7	1,400.8	1,422.8
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group...	1,724.1	1,792.9	1,658.3	1,501.0	1,515.6	1,403.1	223.1	277.3	255.2
Automotive group.....	1,492.1	1,454.3	1,288.4	719.0	716.3	621.1	773.1	738.0	667.3
Gasoline service stations.....	380.9	353.4	301.1	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
Other retail stores.....	1,857.5	1,735.2	1,641.8	1,254.7	1,231.5	1,165.9	602.8	503.7	475.9
RETAIL STORES OF ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING 11 OR MORE STORES									
United States, total ¹	2,038.0	2,147.1	1,905.1	527.2	500.0	453.8	1,510.8	1,647.1	1,451.3
Food group.....	60.2	54.7	52.8	49.9	44.9	42.6	10.3	9.8	10.2
Eating and drinking places.....	10.2	7.8	6.4	10.2	7.8	6.4	0	0	0
General merchandise group.....	890.9	999.2	848.5	128.7	121.6	106.1	762.2	877.6	742.4
Department stores, including mail order.....	840.3	954.0	806.1	120.5	114.7	100.3	719.8	839.3	705.8
Apparel group.....	120.3	108.3	99.3	66.7	59.2	54.0	53.6	49.1	45.3
Furniture and appliance group.....	301.7	309.9	282.2	34.7	31.4	28.4	267.0	278.5	253.8
Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group...	166.0	236.6	213.3	120.7	122.7	113.1	45.3	113.9	100.2
Other retail stores.....	270.7	235.4	219.7	70.8	69.7	67.0	199.9	165.7	152.7

¹ Includes data for kind of business groups not shown separately.

² Not shown because of high sampling variability.

Table 5A.—SAMPLING VARIABILITIES FOR ESTIMATES OF ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE OF ALL RETAIL STORES*

Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)			Kind of business	Sampling variability (percent)		
	Total	Charge accounts	Installments		Total	Charge accounts	Installments
United States, total.....	1	2	3	Furniture and appliance group—Con.			
Food group.....	4	4	10	Household appliance, radio stores.....	5	-	-
Grocery stores.....	4	-	-	Household appliance dealers.....	6	-	-
Eating and drinking places.....	10	10	-	Lumber, building, hardware, farm equipment group.....	4	4	9
General merchandise group.....	1	2	1	Lumber yards, building materials dealers, paint, plumbing, electrical stores.....	5	-	-
Department stores, including mail order	1	2	1	Hardware stores.....	7	-	-
Mail order (catalog sales).....	0	-	-	Automotive group.....	4	4	6
Other general merchandise stores.....	9	-	-	Passenger car dealers, other automotive dealers.....	5	-	-
Apparel group.....	4	4	8	Passenger car dealers.....	5	-	-
Men's, boys' clothing, furnishings stores.....	8	-	-	Tire, battery, accessory dealers.....	5	-	-
Women's ready-to-wear stores.....	6	-	-	Gasoline service stations.....	4	-	-
Family clothing stores.....	9	-	-	Other retail stores.....	4	4	9
Furniture and appliance group.....	4	5	5	Drug and proprietary stores.....	8	-	-
Furniture, home furnishings stores.....	5	-	-				
Furniture stores.....	6	-	-				

* Data on retail stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores are not based on a sample and are therefore not subject to sampling variability.

SAMPLE DESIGN AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

Sample design

The sample used for the Annual Retail Trade Report is essentially the same probability sample used by the Bureau of the Census to produce monthly estimates of sales of retail stores which are published in the Monthly Retail Trade Report¹.

The Annual Retail Trade Report sample consists of the following components:

I. All large organizations--These are organizations which, in the 1948 Census of Business, were reported as operating 11 or more retail stores, regardless of location in the United States. Stores of these firms are referred to as Group II establishments.

II. All other retail stores--These stores, referred to as Group I stores, are represented by establishments located in 230 Census Sample Areas². These Census Sample Areas generally consist of combinations of two or three counties and were chosen randomly (with known probability of selection), one from each of 230 primary strata. Within these 230 Census Sample Areas, the sample consist of:

A. "Large" Group I stores, originally defined as those stores whose annual sales in 1948 exceeded a designated amount varying by kind of business and Census Sample Area. At the time of their selection, these "large" stores were the largest in their kind of business in their immediate locality. Since the Census Sample Areas vary in size from the largest metropolitan areas to the smallest rural areas, the size criteria for the selection of "large" stores also varies widely. Later, the stores "born" since 1948 and whose estimated employment (by the employer) at the time of birth equalled or exceeded the equivalent sales criteria mentioned

above (i.e., by converting the number of employees into approximate sales volume), were added to the "large" store list. Using 1954 annual sales, "large" stores whose 1954 sales failed to exceed designated amounts (again varied by kind of business and Census Sample Area) were eliminated from the group. (This was accomplished prior to the 1955 Annual Retail Trade Survey and therefore does not effect the year-to-year comparability of the panel.) All of the Group I "large" stores are included in the Bureau's monthly sales survey as well as the annual survey.

B. Group I stores other than the "large" stores described in "A" above ("small" stores and new stores regardless of size) are represented by stores located in a subsample of land segments within the Census Sample Areas. These land segments were selected with known probability and designated in 12 panels so that, in general, a different group of land segments is personally enumerated each month of the year for purposes of the monthly report. The stores located in 3 of these panels (the November, December and January panels) were included in the Annual Survey. In addition "special" area segment stores (those having 1954 sales exceeding criteria ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000 depending on kind of business) were included in the Annual Survey regardless of which of the 12 panels they originally fell into (these stores are also reported each month for the Monthly Retail Trade Report).

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF RETAIL STORES IN THE 1956
ANNUAL RETAIL TRADE REPORT

Total	Group II stores	Group I stores		
		"Large" stores	"Special" area segment stores	"Small" stores
16,000	80,000	6,000	6,000	24,000

¹ A revision in the composition of the survey panels of the monthly sample to make use of records of the 1954 Census of Business was made in April 1957; however, since the annual survey was taken prior to April 1957, the more recent monthly sample revision is not reflected in the data presented in this report.

² Group I department stores with sales of \$5 million or more in 1948 are an exception, such establishments being included in the sample, regardless of location.

Reliability of the data

Because the estimates obtained are based on a sample, exact agreement is not expected with the results that would be obtained from a complete Census of retail stores in which the same enumeration procedure is used. However, because every retail store in the United States has had a chance of being selected for the sample, and because the probability of selection for each store in the sample is known, it is possible to approximate the sampling variability of the estimates made from the sample.

Approximate measures of the differences which may exist because of sampling for the 1956 estimates of regional sales, merchandise inventories, and receivables are shown in tables 1A, 2A, and 5A of this report. The sampling variabilities in tables 1A and 5A refer only to the 1956 estimates for all retail stores in tables 1, 4, and 5. Sampling variabilities for the 1955 and 1954 accounts receivable data in this report have not been computed but it is expected that they would be approximated by those for the 1956 receivables data. Sampling variabilities of the inventory estimates for all retail stores and for stores of organizations operating 4 or more retail stores are presented in table 2A. The data in this report for stores of organizations operating 11 or more stores are not based on a sample, and are therefore not subject to sampling variability.

The measures of sampling variability have been computed at the one sigma level. At this level, the chances are two out of three

that the 1956 amounts estimated in this survey would differ from the results of a complete Census using the same enumeration procedure, by less than the percentage shown.

Measures of sampling variability shown in this report do not include biases which might arise from differences of response or non-reporting. However, the nonreporting bias is probably small since less than 5 percent of the total merchandise inventories and accounts receivable estimates have been imputed because of nonresponse. The sales data are based on monthly estimates which have a nonresponse of about 10 percent.

Revisions to 1955 and 1954 merchandise inventories

Merchandise inventories of all passenger car dealers for 1955 and 1954 have been revised from the data presented in the 1955 Annual Retail Trade Report. The revised inventories for all passenger car dealers are as follows: 1955 - \$3,297.8 million, 1954 - \$2,396.5 million. This revision has been used in computing the year-to-year percentage changes presented in table 2 of this publication.

Revisions to 1953 accounts receivable

Year-end 1953 receivables of department stores (including mail order houses) in the 1953 Annual Retail Trade Report has been revised as follows: charge account balances, \$851.0 million; installment account balances, \$1,007.1 million; total accounts receivable, \$1,858.1 million.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Retail trade

Retail trade includes those establishments primarily engaged in selling merchandise for personal, household, or farm consumption. Some of the important characteristics of retail trade establishments are: The establishment is a recognizable place of business and is engaged in activities to attract the general public to buy; the establishment buys or receives merchandise as well as sells; the establishment renders services or processes only incidental or subordinate to selling; the establishment is considered retail by the trade. Not all of these characteristics need be present, and some are modified by trade practice. Excluded from Retail Trade are peddlers and itinerant vendors without an established place of business. Also excluded are places of business operated by institutions and open only to their own members or personnel, such as restaurants and bars operated by country clubs, school cafeterias, cafeterias operated by industrial plants for their employees, and establishments operated by agencies of the Federal Government on military posts, at hospitals, etc.

Retail stores

These are separate places of business primarily engaged in selling merchandise at retail. In addition to those kinds of business readily recognizable as retail stores, such as grocery stores and drug stores, the term retail stores also includes eating and drinking places, gasoline service stations, lumber yards, coal yards, mail order houses, establishments from which direct selling (house-to-house) is conducted, and establishments which sell merchandise through coin-operated vending machines. Stores with annual sales less than \$500 during the year 1956 were excluded from the tabulations for this Annual Retail Trade Report.

Warehouses of firms operating 11 or more retail stores

These are warehouses which maintain a supply of merchandise and are primarily engaged in distributing that merchandise to retail stores within their own organization.

Sales

Sales include total receipts from customers during the year after deduction of refunds and allowances for merchandise returned by customers. Sales include receipts from repairs and from other services to customers; sales for resale; and sales taxes and excise taxes. The sales figures represent total

sales and receipts of all establishments primarily engaged in retail trade. They do not include sales at retail by manufacturers, wholesalers, service establishments, and other businesses whose primary activity is other than retail trade.

Merchandise inventories

Merchandise inventories in retail stores are stocks of goods (valued at cost) held for sale through the stores. Merchandise inventories in warehouses represent goods (valued at cost) which are held primarily for distribution to the retail stores within a firm's own organization.

Merchandise inventories do not include the value of fixtures, furnishings, equipment, and supplies used in store and warehouse operations and not held for resale. Inventories were reported as of the close of the calendar years, except for some businesses which used a fiscal year rather than the calendar year for accounting purposes. Data so reported have been accepted and included in the tabulations without adjustment.

Sales-inventory ratio

This is the relationship of annual sales to December 31 inventories. The ratio is derived by dividing annual sales by the cost value of year-end inventories. This sales-inventory ratio is based on data for only those stores in operation throughout the full year except for the ratios for organizations with 11 or more stores which are derived from annual sales figures containing sales of some stores not in operation the full year. Ratios for organizations with 11 or more stores are based on store inventories only and do not include warehouse inventories.

Accounts receivable

These are credit sales balances due retail stores from customers. They are shown as receivables outstanding as of the end of the year. Receivables against which the firm may have borrowed are included. However, credit paper discounted or sold to others and accounts actually charged off as bad debts are excluded. Consumer credit paper held by financial institutions and collection agencies is not included.

Charge account receivables--

These are receivables outstanding for which full payment was scheduled to be made at the end of the customary billing period.

Installment account receivables--

These are receivables outstanding for which payment was scheduled to be paid in two or more parts.